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No. 1 contained decaying blades of eel grass quite abundantly; and the remains of several kinds of shells which were much decayed and generally mere casts; the first two kinds only have the shell solid. *Buccinum undatum* (two specimens); *Fusus decemcostatus* (8); Pecten (two species; one *P. islandicus*); *Serripes Grœnlandica* (10); numerous specimens of *Mya arenaria* and *Mytilus edulis* (3); *Leda*, a few small decayed valves, possibly of Macoma; also what appeared to be the shell of a small crustacean, not an inch long.

In No. 3, the pebbles were conglômerated with oxide of iron in one place.

No. 5, a loose narrow stratum, evidently deposited in shallow water, held many broken and worn shells of clam, mussel, *Macoma fusca* and *Leda Jacksoni*.

No. 6 seems to mark the emergence of the beds, showing a change in the water courses produced by the elevation of some higher land than at this point, from the water. — PAUL SHERMAN.

ANTHROPOLOGY.

PREHISTORIC CULTURE OF FLAX.— Dr. Oswald Heer, the eminent botanist, and one who has devoted so much attention to the structure and history of fossil plants, publishes an article upon flax and its culture among the ancients, especially the prehistoric races of Europe. His memoir may be summarized as follows: First, flax has been cultivated in Egypt for five thousand years and that it was and is one of the most generally diffused plants of that country. It occupied a similar position in ancient Babylonia, in Palestine, and on the Black Sea. It occurred in Greece during the prehistoric period, and at an early date was carried into Italy, while its cultivation in Spain was probably originated by the Phœnicians and Carthagenians. Second, it is also met with in the oldest Swiss lacustrine villages, while, at the same time no hemp nor fabrics manufactured from wool are there to be found. This is considered a remarkable fact, since the sheep was one of the oldest domestic animals, and was known during the stone period. The impossibility of shearing the fleece by means of stone or bone implements is supposed to have been the reason why woollen fabrics were not used. It is thought probable that the skin, with its attached wool, was made use of for articles of clothing. Third, the lake dwellers probably received flax from Southern Europe, from which section fresh seeds must have been derived from time to time. The variety cultivated was the small, native, narrow-leaved kind from the coast of the Mediterranean, and not at all that now raised in Europe. It must, therefore, have been cultivated also in Southern Europe, although Dr. Heer could not ascertain among what people and at what age this took place. If this could be ascertained it would be an important point in the determination of the antiquity of the lake dwellers. Fourth, at the time of the empire both summer flax and winter flax were cultivated in Italy, as now, but in what form it was grown in ancient Egypt is not determined. It is thought probable that the narrow-leaved variety was first introduced and after that the Roman, and then the common varieties followed. The common plant has doubtless arisen from the cultivation of the narrow-leaved, while the Roman winter flax and the *Linum ambiguum* constitute the intermediate stages. The original home of the cultivated flax was therefore along the shores of the Mediterranean. The Egyptians had probably cultivated it, and from them its use was doubtless disseminated. It is possible that the wild variety and the winter flax were grown elsewhere at the same time, when the cultivated variety had long since driven them out of use in Egypt.—*Nature.*

"INDIAN NETSINKERS" IN NEW JERSEY.—Both the netsinkers and hammerstones, as described by Mr. Rau, in the March number of the NATURALIST, are exceedingly abundant in many localities in New Jersey. Especially along the banks of the Delaware River, and about the creeks that empty into that river, we have found the "sinkers," literally, by hundreds. They are now so abundant in the bed and about the shores of Watson's Creek, Mercer Co., that we do not pretend to gather them, when collecting unless one of unusual shape or size attracts our attention. The collection from this state, made by the writer, and now in the museum of the Peabody Academy, Salem, Mass., contains many specimens identical in all respects with those figured on page 140 of the present volume of this journal; unless it be, that the majority are somewhat smaller and less heavy than the average of the "Muncy" specimens.

The remarks of Mr. Rau, on the hammerstones found associated with the "sinkers," at Muncy, will only in part apply to this same class of relics, found in the neighborhood of Trenton, New Jersey. So far as the writer's experience in collecting goes, these hammerstones are found away from the water, on the sites of villages, and more particularly on the sites of the operations of arrowhead makers. Curiously enough, too, the average weight of these hammer-stones is greater, as we have found them, than the average weight of those found at Muncy, Pennsylvania, by Mr. Rau. Always associated with the ordinary hammerstone, which is that with a depression on either side, for the ends of the thumb and second finger, is a smaller cylindrical hammer, of harder mineral, with nothing to indicate that it is a "relic," other than the well battered ends, which are as well marked in these specimens, as the similar batterings and finger pits are in the typical hammerstones. — CHARLES C. ABBOTT, M. D.

ANTIQUITY OF MAN IN AMERICA. — In the December number of this Journal we made an abstract of a paper printed by the Philadelphia Academy, in which Mr. Berthoud gave an account of the relics of an early race of men. As the geological position of the relics has been questioned, further information is very desirable.

MICROSCOPY.

A NEW SLIDE FOR THE MICROSCOPE.—At a recent meeting of the Optical Section of the Franklin Institute, there was described and exhibited in operation a new adjunct to the microscope, designed by Mr. D. S. Holman, a member of the section, whose life slide recently attracted so much attention and comment. The new device may be called a current cell, or moist chamber, and is designed to afford the microscopist the opportunity of observing and studying the constitution of the blood and other organic fluids with much greater ease and precision than it has heretofore been found possible to. attain. The accompanying illustration will serve to make the description of its construction and operation manifest: The slide consists of a plain piece of plate glass of considerable thickness, and three inches by one in dimensions. This is furnished at equal distances from its centre with two well polished shallow cavities of circular form, which are connected with each other by one or more capillary channels. These channels are likewise polished, and to permit of a greater field in